

KEITH ELLISON

5TH DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

2263 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4755

2100 PLYMOUTH AVENUE NORTH  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55411  
(612) 522-1212

ellison.house.gov

TWITTER: @keithellison



CHIEF DEPUTY WHIP

CO-CHAIR CONGRESSIONAL  
PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL MARKETS AND  
GOVERNMENT SPONSORED ENTERPRISES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
HOUSING AND INSURANCE

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 28, 2018

The Hon. William B. Long  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Administrator Long:

I write to understand the Federal Emergency Management Agency's ("FEMA") recent decision to remove all references to climate change and global warming in its 2018-2022 Strategic Plan. This is a significant departure from FEMA's 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and the timing of this change is concerning given the growing consensus among scientists that the increase in extreme weather events in recent years is associated with the effects of climate change.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 2017 was "the most expensive year on record for disasters."<sup>1</sup> Millions of Americans experienced the devastating effects of Hurricanes Maria, Harvey, and Irma, and the California wildfires. These disasters caused hundreds of billions of dollars in damage and resulted in irreparable destruction of homes and property and the loss of hundreds of lives.<sup>2</sup> This has placed significant new burdens on FEMA; for example, "to support the great demand for disaster assistance...FEMA increased call center staffing tenfold...and the overall number of housing inspectors fourfold."<sup>3</sup> The scientific community has cautioned that the frequency and intensity of these weather events will only continue to increase unless we make "dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions," posing even greater burdens on FEMA.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Weather disasters cost the US a record \$390 billion in 2017," (online at <https://www.smh.com.au/world/north-america/hurricanes-wildfires-made-2017-the-most-costly-us-disaster-year-on-record-20180109-p4yybw.html>)

<sup>2</sup> "Extreme hurricanes and wildfires made 2017 the most costly U.S. disaster year on record," (online at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/01/08/hurricanes-wildfires-made-2017-the-most-costly-u-s-disaster-year-on-record/?utm\\_term=.0801514295be](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/01/08/hurricanes-wildfires-made-2017-the-most-costly-u-s-disaster-year-on-record/?utm_term=.0801514295be))

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, (online at <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2017/12/29/fema-reflects-historic-year>)

<sup>4</sup> "Extreme hurricanes and wildfires made 2017 the most costly U.S. disaster year on record," (online at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/01/08/hurricanes-wildfires-made-2017-the-most-costly-u-s-disaster-year-on-record/?utm\\_term=.c00133588501](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/01/08/hurricanes-wildfires-made-2017-the-most-costly-u-s-disaster-year-on-record/?utm_term=.c00133588501))

Given the extraordinary devastation caused by natural disasters last year, I was surprised to find that FEMA removed all mentions of climate change from its 2018-2022 Strategic Plan. In particular, the 2018-2022 Plan removed priority 4 from the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan which stated “The Nation faces increasing disaster risk in the near and long term due to multiple interacting factors such as...climate change.”<sup>5</sup> This change is inexplicable, given that one of the goals of the Strategic Plan is to ensure that “every segment of our society...[is] encouraged and empowered with the information it needs to prepare for the inevitable impacts of future disasters,” in order to execute FEMA's vision of “a prepared and resilient Nation.”<sup>6</sup> The nation can neither be prepared for nor resilient in the face of climate-induced disasters if government leaders ignore the scientific information related to climate change and its risks.

FEMA’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan claims that one of FEMA’s main objectives is “meeting the emerging challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century disasters and the changing nature of the risks we face.”<sup>7</sup> It is puzzling to understand how FEMA could meet the emerging challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century disasters while ignoring the mounting evidence of the link between climate change and weather events. Last year's Climate Science Special Report, part of the National Climate Assessment, found that natural disasters intensified by global warming will become more frequent and problematic as temperatures rise.<sup>8</sup>

To help me understand why any and all mentions of climate change and global warming were removed from FEMA’s Strategic Plan, I request that you provide my office with answers to the following questions on how the decision was made, no later than April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

1. What analysis, if any, was used to conclude that climate change and global warming are not strategic risks worthy of inclusion in the FEMA Strategic Plan? Please provide copies of any analysis used.
2. What individuals or offices within FEMA or the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) were involved in the decision to strip all mentions of climate change from the FEMA Strategic Plan? Please provide information on all of these individuals and their role in the decision.

---

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, “2014-2018 Strategic Plan”, (online at <https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1405716454795-3abe60aec989ecce518c4cdba67722b8/July18FEMAStratPlanDigital508HiResFINALh.pdf>)

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, “2018-2022 Strategic Plan”, (online at [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1521736077767-89fc0afeacb7a93bd7b6a1091aaeba2b/strat\\_plan.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1521736077767-89fc0afeacb7a93bd7b6a1091aaeba2b/strat_plan.pdf))

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, “2018-2022 Strategic Plan”, (online at [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1521736077767-89fc0afeacb7a93bd7b6a1091aaeba2b/strat\\_plan.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1521736077767-89fc0afeacb7a93bd7b6a1091aaeba2b/strat_plan.pdf))

<sup>8</sup> “Trump's FEMA Ignores Climate Change in Strategic Plan for Disaster Response,” (online at <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/16032018/fema-strategic-plan-climate-change-natural-disasters-relief-flood-maps-storms-wildfires>)

3. Were any individuals from the White House or the Executive Office of the President involved in this decision? If so, please provide information on these individuals and their role in the decision. Please provide copies of emails, and any other communications related to this decision.
4. Was the decision on what to include in the Strategic Plan discussed with any agencies outside DHS or the White House? If so, please provide information on which individuals and agencies were involved in this decision, including copies of emails, and any other communications related to this decision.
5. Which outside organizations or individuals did you meet with prior to making this decision? Please provide copies of emails, and any other communications related to this decision.
6. Did FEMA consult with any scientists or climate experts when making this decision? Please identify these individuals.
7. Do you believe there is a link between human activity, the changing climate, and extreme weather events?

Thank you for the consideration of this request. You may reach out to Mahyar Sorour on my staff at [mahyar.sorour@mail.house.gov](mailto:mahyar.sorour@mail.house.gov) with any questions.

Sincerely,



Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress